
Preface – Who We Are
“Why I Am a Liberal” by Bob Beckel
“Why I Am a Conservative” by Cal Thomas

Part I – Where We Are
Chapter 1 – The People vs. the Polarization of American Politics
p. 36 Polarization has always been a factor in politics and always will be, but it has historically been active at the fringes of American politics. Bipartisanship and consensus had been the dominant forces in politics and powerful counterforces to polarization. That changed over the last three decades as polarization came to dominate politics while bipartisanship became increasingly marginalized.

Chapter 2 – The Polarization of American Politics
p. 38 According to Princeton sociologist Paul DiMaggio, 30 percent of eligible voters identify themselves as “strong Republicans” or “strong Democrats.” This means roughly 65 million eligible voters are strong partisans. This minority is at the core of polarization…. How does a minority of voters, however dedicated, dominate a country of 300 million? First, they vote in much larger percentages than the moderate, less-partisan majority of voters, and many (but far from all) have a deep and emotional attachment to their agendas. They are politically active, and as a result control the management, organization, and funding of the political process.

p. 41 But today’s polarization has become more than the product of opposing ideologies. For many – let’s call them secular polarizers (moneyed interests, party operatives, bottom feeders, etc.) – it has become an artificially stimulated environment for the sole purpose of retaining political power, raising money, or making more money. It is the foundation of a rigged system that benefits a few at the expense of the many. While it may be true that some polarizers remain driven by deeply held ideological principles, they are the minority within a minority.

Chapter 3 – “The Rest of Us”
p. 51 Moderates are not necessarily people without convictions, though some such species exist. Moderates may hold strong convictions, but they are often willing to compromise with someone who disagrees in order to advance a policy that benefits the most people…. Being a moderate voice in Washington these days almost guarantees immediate retaliation by one’s own party. Money sources and interests, which thrive in the climate of polarization, cut you off and cut you down.

Chapter 4 – Congressional Stories 
Chapter 5 – The Parties
p. 62 As governments at all levels began to rein in patronage, party organizations lost government workers to do their bidding. p. 63 Without patronage jobs, party operations had to depend increasingly on unpaid volunteers to do the political jobs patronage workers once performed. Like any other volunteer, a political party volunteer will work harder if motivated by a cause…. That’s one reason why there has been an explosion of social-issue referendums on election ballots. There’s nothing like a referendum on gay marriage or abortion to get election workers motivated and strong partisans to the polls.

Chapter 6 – The Press, Fund-raisers, and Myths
p. 72 Most [political fund-raisers] will admit that raising campaign money is much easier in a polarized climate. p. 74 To make that sale, polarizers have relied heavily on two myths, and they have done a masterful job of selling both. [red state/blue state, and culture war]

p. 75 Red state/blue state has become a widely used stereotype for our political differences. To characterize an entire state as Republican or Democrat based on the popular vote for a presidential candidate is absurd…. Once tagged red or blue, a state inherits the simplistic definition associated with the two colors… Therein lies the problem. As a political theory, the red/blue division, at least among average Americans, is largely a myth. Life is complicated; the political philosophies, morals, and ethical
standards of real people are just not that black and white (or red and blue for that matter).

p. 78 In a speech to the Republican National Convention in Houston on August 17, 1992, Pat Buchanan declared that America was engaged in a culture war.... [“]There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself.”[“] p. 80 The so-called culture war is being fought on the fringes between ideologues from the right and left. It does not divide the majority of Americans, and it certainly does not divide along state lines.

**Part II – The Gathering Storms** [that produced a climate of polarization]

**Chapter 7 – Storm Clouds from the South** [In the civil rights/Vietnam era, concerns about Democrats’ patriotism, commitment to national security, stance on crime. Support of labor unions, minority groups, and the growing feminist and environmental movements gave Republicans an opening to label Democrats as the party of special interests.]

**Chapter 8 – A Circular Firing Squad**

p. 96 [1972] The Republican Party, expecting long coattails in Nixon’s forty-nine state romp, got none. In the Senate, the GOP actually lost seats. Voters split their ballots in every region of the country, opting to continue divided government and maintain the status quo of checks and balances between the White House and Congress. With the country so divided, voters were reluctant to put their trust in one party, a voting pattern that would repeat itself in future elections.

Chapter 9 – “I’ll Never Lie to You” [President Carter’s political setbacks]

Chapter 10 – *Roe v. Wade* [rise of Jerry Falwell and Moral Majority]

Chapter 11 – *The Reagan Revolution* [tax and budget cuts, Social Security tax increase]

**Part III – Storms**

Chapter 12 – *Iran-Contra and Bob Bork: The Peace Ends*

Chapter 13 – *The Politics of Personal Destruction*

p. 128 [contributing factors - Independent Counsel Act spurred muckraking; rejection of Bork – first time on grounds of conservative philosophy rather than something like conflict of interest or financial impropriety; generation of consultants focused on negative campaign ads; rise of Internet and blogs]

Chapter 14 – *Polarization’s Poster Children: Bill Clinton and George W. Bush*

p. 132 [unable to seek compromises because both elected under a cloud – Clinton in 3-way race, Bush after losing popular vote; and because neither’s party leadership wanted bipartisanship]

Chapter 15 – *Clinton Years/Clinton Wars*

Chapter 16 – *Clinton’s Revenge* [opponents were never able to remove him from office]

Chapter 17 – *George Bush Rides In*

Chapter 18 – *War Abroad and War at Home*

**Part IV – The Way We Were**

Chapter 19 – *A Change of Culture* [the era of divided government that began in 1954]

Chapter 20 – *When Adults Were in Charge* [leaders behaving in contrast to partisan stereotypes]

Chapter 21 – *Bipartisanship*

p. 174 Today’s Democrats and Republicans rarely find bipartisan consensus on anything, mostly because they don’t look for it. Cooperation across party lines is now regarded as a sign of weakness and disloyalty. Parties constantly prop up “the base,” which is supremely ideological and fundamentally unforgiving of anything it regards as compromise. p. 175 [the Panama Canal Treaties, a bipartisan success story]

Chapter 22 – *The Power of the Parlor*

p. 178 [benefits of former lifestyle in Washington – longer sessions, socializing across party lines, influential hostesses]

**Part V – Common Ground**

Chapter 23 – *Common Ground: Slogan or Choice?*
Chapter 25 – Selling Common Ground


p. 205 Common ground is not a theory or an issue, and it’s not a mealy-mouthed, let’s-split-the-difference message. Nor is it a strategy that is at odds with either party’s ideology. By seeking common ground, politicians are not required to abandon their deeply held beliefs. More important, common ground is not a new nonpartisan movement. In fact, common ground can’t realistically work without partisanship.

p. 209 Campaign Recommendations 1. CAMPAIGN AGAINST POLARIZATION. p. 210 Polarization is an evil but powerful force in politics, and driving it off center stage is going to take guts and determination. It will require a strategy of confrontation and hardball politics. It is not a strategy for the faint of heart.... [Voters] will expect a candidate who campaigns against polarization to name names, and to not be afraid to name the polarizers in his or her own party.

p. 211 2. DO NOT CAMPAIGN AS THE DEMOCRATIC OR REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT, BUT AS A COMMON GROUND CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

p. 213 3. MATCH RONALD REAGAN’S BET, AND RAISE IT. Ronald Reagan said he believed in an “eleventh commandment”: never speak ill of a fellow Republican. In a common ground general election, we would broaden that to “speak as little ill of your opponent as is reasonable and politically practical.”

p. 215 4. GIVE YOUR OPPONENT CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE; AND IN THE PROCESS GET CREDIT FOR GIVING CREDIT.

p. 216 5. MR. LINCOLN AND MR. DOUGLAS HAD A GREAT IDEA; USE IT. [unscripted debates]

p. 220 6. A COMMON GROUND CANDIDATE SHOULD PROMISE (SINCERELY) TO INCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE OTHER PARTY IN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION.

p. 222 7. A COMMON GROUND CAMPAIGN MESSAGE SHOULD NOT INCLUDE COMMON GROUND SOLUTIONS…. Remember, common ground is not a set of ideas; it is a process for governing that can break the paralysis that has set in after two decades of polarization.

p. 225 A candidate with a common ground message will be asked to explain how a common ground governing strategy would work. The following is a set of principles that are essential if consensus is to emerge on any significant issue.

THERE MUST BE AGREEMENT THAT A PROBLEM EXISTS, AND AGREEMENT ON WHAT GOAL NEEDS TO BE REACHED TO ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM.

p. 226 FOR A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE TO BE RESOLVED IN A COMMON GROUND CLIMATE, IT MUST CONTAIN ELEMENTS OF THE HISTORICAL ORTHODOXY OF BOTH PARTIES.

p. 228 THE CHANCES FOR CONSENSUS ON A SOLUTION INCREASE DRAMATICALLY WHEN FRESH IDEAS TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM ARE BROUGHT TO THE TABLE.

p. 231 A COMMON GROUND STRATEGY FOR GOVERNING MUST BE PROVIDED WITH THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE AMOUNT OF POLITICAL COVER.

p. 243 DO NOT PICK FIGHTS WHERE THE OTHER FOUR COMMON GROUND GOVERNING PRINCIPLES DO NOT AND CANNOT APPLY.

p. 246 [U]nless we can elect a president who campaigns and wins elections on a commitment to governing in a climate of common ground, other elected politicians are unlikely to succeed. Common ground requires a strong leader to give them the best climate in which to try.

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